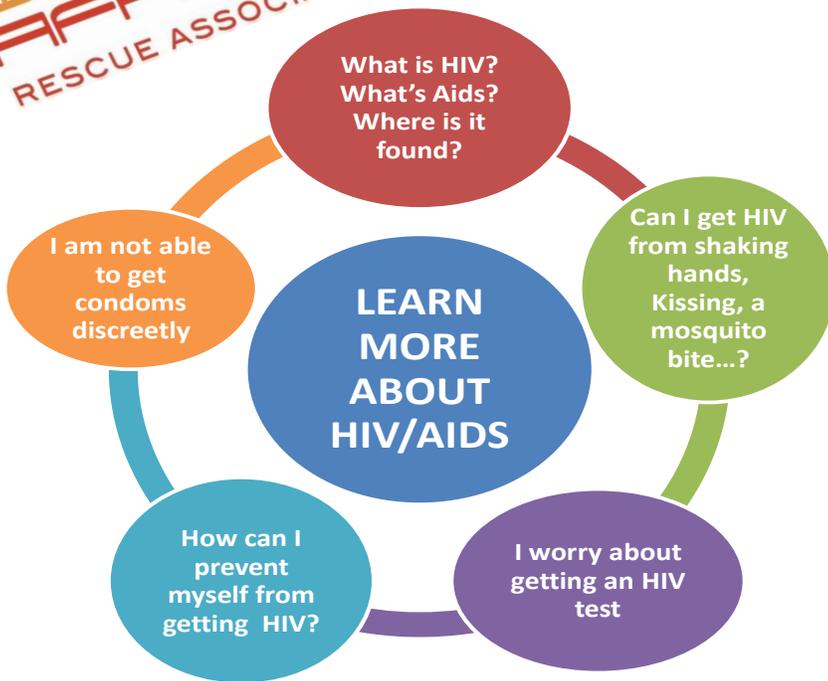


# WORLD AIDS DAY

1<sup>st</sup> December 2012

WEST  
AFRICAN  
RESCUE ASSOCIATION



**“GETTING TO ZERO:**  
Zero new HIV infections  
Zero discrimination  
Zero AIDS related deaths”

## WHAT TO KNOW ABOUT HIV

### 1. HIV: One of the World's leading infectious killers

**The Human Immunodeficiency Virus (HIV)** is a retrovirus infecting cells of the immune system, destroying or impairing their function.

As the infection progresses, the immune system becomes weaker, and the person becomes more susceptible to infections.

The most advanced stage of HIV infection is **AIDS (Acquired Immunodeficiency Syndrome)**. It can take 10-15 years for an HIV infected person to develop AIDS.

### 2. Key Facts

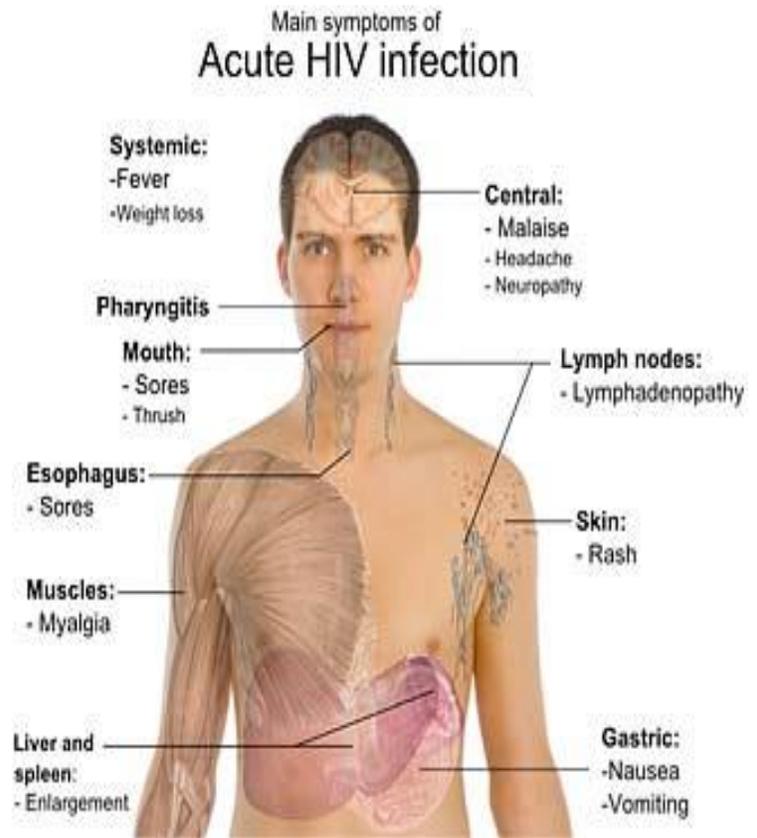
According to the World Health Organization, there were approximately 34.2 million people living with HIV in 2011. 60% were in Sub-Saharan Africa. More than 25 million deaths from AIDS has occurred over the last 30 years.

In Ghana, 260 000 people are living with HIV. The sad fact is that 27 000 are children aged between 0 and 14 years. In 2009, 18 000 deaths were due to AIDS (UNAIDS, 2009).



### 3. Signs and Symptoms

- The first few weeks after initial infection, individuals may experience no symptoms or **flu-like illness including fever, headache, joint pains, rash or sore throat.**
- The infection progressively weakens the person's immune system. The individual can develop other signs and symptoms such as **swollen lymph nodes, weight loss, fever, vomiting, diarrhea and cough.**
- Without treatment, they could also develop other severe illnesses such as tuberculosis, meningitis, and cancers.



### 4. Transmission

HIV can be transmitted via unprotected sex or close contact with body fluids of infected individuals, such as **blood, breast milk, semen** and **vaginal secretions.**

⚠ Individuals cannot become infected through ordinary day-to-day contact such as kissing, hugging, shaking hands, sharing personal objects, food or water...

**NO NEED TO FEAR NORMAL SOCIAL INTERACTIONS WITH PEOPLE LIVING WITH HIV !**



Unprotected anal, oral or vaginal sex with an HIV infected partner



Mother-to-child transmission during pregnancy, childbirth, or breastfeeding



Sharing contaminated syringes, needles and other injection systems



Transfusion with HIV infected blood products



The use of contaminated skin piercing and tattooing instruments



The use of contaminated razors and toothbrush with blood residue

## 5. Diagnosis

An HIV blood test reveals infection status by detecting the presence or absence of antibodies to HIV in the blood.

After the virus enters the bloodstream, it takes the human body 3-12 weeks to create the required number of antibodies necessary for detection in blood tests. Patient may test negative during this **“window period”**. Re-testing is recommended after 3 months to confirm the tests results.

**HIV rapid blood tests are available in WARA'S clinics.**



## 6. Treatment

- No cure for HIV has been found yet
- **Antiretroviral therapy** allows an individual's immune system to strengthen and regain the power to fight infections.
- Antiretroviral therapy help those with HIV to live a healthier, longer and more productive life!
- HIV affects all dimensions of a person's life: physical, spiritual psychological, and social. **Counseling and social support** can help those with HIV to cope more effectively with the disease and enhances the quality of life.



## 7. Prevention: The Only Cure

- **Safe sex:** Correct and consistent use of male and female condoms during vaginal or anal penetration.
- **Safe motherhood:** Get tested if you are pregnant.
- **Safe blood:** Judicious use of blood and use only well pre-tested HIV free blood products.
- **Safe needles:** Do not reuse needles, syringes or other injection system .
- **Safe instruments:** Never share shaving blades or toothbrush with anyone. Always make sure that the instruments ( piercing or tattooing) you are using are sterilized.

